

Chapter 10

Foster Children and Deviance Risks After Emancipation

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this chapter is how foster children may become at risk of displaying deviant behavior after emancipation from care. The chapter argues that there is a special need to provide for young people's legal protection and care after emancipation. The chapter then highlights the issues surrounding of foster children being abused and neglected, aging out of the system, and the programs offered as they overcome certain measures during their adolescent years. This research advocates for foster children in this category and outlines how their deviant behavior is perceived and defined and asks if this perception is just a stereotype. The research methodologies included interviews from those involved in the foster care system, in addition to literature and research from professional foster agencies.

INTRODUCTION

Foster care is a system in which a minor has been placed into a ward, group home, or private home of a state-certified caregiver, referred to as a “foster parent” or a family member approved by the state. The placement of the child is normally arranged through the government or a social service agency. The institution, group home, or foster parent is then compensated for the expenses unless the child is with a family member. Children who grow up within the foster care system are more likely to partake in deviant behavior, and with certain programs, it will limit the deviance of those being released. The researcher involved mixed methods as my methodology, consisting of fieldwork, interviews, and a review of relevant agencies and literature about foster children.

Furthermore, across the United States, we can find up to half a million children placed in foster care services (U.S Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Young people who have become legal adults are ‘aged out’ of foster care and stop receiving assistance from child protective services, and they reach eighteen to twenty-five years of age and the juvenile or family court terminates its jurisdiction. In many states, childhood is seen to end legally at age eighteen. On top of that, children who have suffered

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abuse or neglect cannot safely remain with their families and child welfare officials are obligated to provide them safe and appropriate homes to ensure their wellbeing and recover from the trauma. Many children are further maltreated at the hands of the people entrusted with their protection.

Foster children experience a wide variety of different forms of abuse and neglect that no child should face alone or be exposed to at all. Many programs are offered to help these adolescents but not in time for something to be done or fixed. Later stated in my interviews I will discuss commonalities of treatment, programs provided, and age groups of the interviews and their unique experiences.

Abuse and Neglect

From 1993 through 2002 there were 107 recorded deaths within foster homes; there are approximately 400,000 children in out-of-home care in the United States. Almost 10% of children in foster care have stayed in foster care for five or more years. Nearly half of all children in the foster care system have chronic medical problems:

About 8% of all children in foster care have serious emotional problems, 11% of children exiting foster care aged out of the system in 2011 (Wexler, 2017).

Children in foster care experience high rates of child abuse, emotional deprivation, and physical neglect. A recent study of foster children found that nearly one third reported being abused by a foster parent, another adult in a foster home, social workers, religious advisors, teachers, or anyone else in the child's life. It becomes common for sexual predators to use their position in the child's life to take advantage of the child. Many of these abusers don't usually have a criminal record of abuse This further leads to PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), resulting in many children within foster care:

Studies show that 60% of children in foster care who had experienced sexual abuse had PTSD, and 42% of those who had been physically abused met the PTSD criteria (Child Trauma Academy, 2002).

PTSD was also found in 18% of the children who were not abused, although many experienced trauma simply by witnessing violence within the home. Many children from ages 14-18 were found to experience the highest levels of PTSD. In addition, when foster children experience physical or mental abuse within the first 5 years of their lives they are at a greater risk for being arrested as juveniles, nonviolent and status offenses. Starting at such a young age high levels of abuse and neglect can continue those levels of PTSD into adulthood. In continuum, physically and mentally abused adolescents were less likely to have graduated from high school, been a teen parent, these being more prevalent for females than males. Much of the delinquency is led by aggression, malnutrition, and sexual abuse and neglect starting at a very young age and only progressing as time goes by and they age within the system.

Aging out of the System

Young people who have become legal adults are 'aged out' of foster care and stop receiving assistance from child protective services. Ranging from 18-25 years of age the juvenile or family court terminates its jurisdiction. In much of the United States, you 'age out' of childhood at 18. This means that nearly 30,000 youth age out of the foster care system according to the 2009 statistics.

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